

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

Special Meeting

Monday – May 4, 2020 – 10:30 A.M.

The Special Meeting of the Knox County Commission was held on Monday, May 4, 2020, at 10:30 A.M., via a teleconference call.

Commission members present were: Dorothy G. Meriwether, Commissioner District #1 and Sharyn L. Pohlman, Commissioner District #3 and Richard L. Parent, Jr., Commissioner District #2.

County staff present at the teleconference call included: Administrative Assistant Wendy Galvin, Sheriff Tim Carroll, Deputy Chief Patrick Polky, EMA Director Ray Sisk, Administrative Programs Coordinator Candice Richards, Finance Director Kathy Robinson, Communications Director Robert Coombs, Systems Administrator Mike Dean, Register of Deeds Madelene Cole, Airport Manager Jeremy Shaw, and District Attorney Natasha Irving, Prosecutorial Assistant/Investigator Shane Riley and HR Laurie Bouchard .

Absent: County Administrator Andrew Hart, Jail Administrator Ray Porter, Register Elaine Hallett and Maintenance Manager James Hagan.

Others in attendance: PenBay Pilot Reporter Chris Wolf, and Village Soup Reporter Steve Betts arrived after the teleconference call.

Special Meeting – Agenda **Monday – May 4, 2020 – 10:30 A.M.**

I. 10:30 Meeting Called To Order

II. 10:31 Work Session with Department Managers

III. 10:45 Action Item

1. Act to Authorize the EMA Director to Expend Funds from the EMA Disaster Reserve and/or Matching Grant Reserve Accounts Relating to the COVID -19 Pandemic.

IV. Adjourn

I. Meeting Called to Order

Commissioner Pohlman called the Special Meeting of the Knox County Commission to order at 10:30 A.M.

II. Public Comment

Chair, Commissioner Pohlman asked if there was any public comment.
None.

III. Work Session - Department Managers:

- **Registry of Deeds ~ Maddy Cole:**

There is someone in the office at all times. Register Cole is here most days. Things are the same, we are still working some from home and some in the office, and we are alternating. Business has not changed much, it's staying pretty level. We just hired a third person about a week ago, so that will make things a little easier. Both Angela and I are training her.

- **District Attorney's Office – Natasha Irving:**

There is really nothing that has changed in our office. We have adjusted pretty well to the new schedule of working from home and in the office; we also have been alternating schedules. We are keeping at least one person in the office at all times. The D.A.'s office is still doing a lot of collaborative work with the Sheriff's Department and it is working out well.

- **Finance Department – Kathy Robinson:**
There is nothing new to report in the Finance Department. We are still continuing on the same as the last update. We are all alternating schedules where we work from home and in the office.
- **KRCC – Robert Coombs:**
Everything is pretty much the same as last month. We are adjusting to any changes day by day. All the Dispatchers are here and ready. The call volume is going down, not increasing.
- **EMA – Ray Sisk:**
AT EMA we are basically working seven days a week. To help us with the load we have hired an additional staff member, Andy Germann. He'll be giving us a hand with resources and operations. Right now there is a big push to procure additional PPE as there is a concern with long-term care facilities. So we took it on as our mission to make sure that all of our facilities in Knox County have the Respiratory Protection Program, completed their medical screening /training and complete their "fit test" for the N95 masks. We will be going out on the bus that we have rented and competing "fit testing". There are nine facilities scheduled over the next two days. Other parts of the State are using the National Guard to help with "fit testing". So the plan is to have everyone squared away this week. We have spent about \$27,000 on PPE recently. EMA has about 10,000 surgical masks to hand out mostly to Fire Departments, and to people that really need them. We were also able to get some to hand out to the Departments in Knox County at the Courthouse, Jail, Sheriff's Office, Finance, D.A.'s Office, Probate and Registry of Deeds. Candice has been participating on facilitating a Food Pantry Working Group for Knox County. She has participated in the Donations and Volunteer Management statewide calls a couple of times a week. Candice also has a weekly call that she hosts here in the local area of the Food Pantries so they can discuss where they are at and what is going on. There are thirteen Food Pantries and one Soup Kitchen and about ten of those get their food from the Good Shepherd Food Bank. Currently, they are out of food because of the high demand. Instead of going to the local grocery stores, because they are out of a lot of things, we have been looking to purchase food other ways. Ray has been working with some of the smaller pantries to order more USDA food that can be delivered there. MEMA, at the State level has been heavily involved with the food and getting it to Good Shepherd and distributing water and things like that.

Candice Richards Food Pantry update:

There are 13 food pantries and 1 soup kitchen in Knox County. Two of the 13, on North Haven and Matinicus, Candice only found out about within the last couple weeks. They were flying under the radar because they don't purchase any food from Good Shepherd Food Bank, whereas most food pantries get the bulk of their food from Good Shepherd.

Besides counting on USDA, Good Shepherd buys food themselves to distribute. The USDA contracts with Good Shepherd to distribute 80% of the USA food stored in Maine, with the USDA storing 20% of the food at their own facility. One of the reasons some food pantries don't work with Good Shepherd is because the food isn't free – they have to pay for it. Even when Good Shepherd has food donated to them, they are still charging food pantries for it. Some of the smaller pantries prefer to stick with donations or grants from local organizations.

At the end of March, Candice realized food pantries may need some help, so she reached out to several people in an attempt to get a complete list of the pantries in Knox County as well as their contact info. Candice started holding a weekly Zoom call with people from the pantries that wanted to participate. A rep from Good Shepherd has been participating, along with representatives from Chellie Pingree's office and Angus King's office (Chris Rector). There are a few pantries from Waldo and Lincoln Counties that have been participating as well. Some of the outside people are observing for "situational awareness". Don Grinnell helped Candice get many of the pantries signed up in the FEMA grants portal which will enable them to apply for reimbursement through

Public Assistance because of the disaster declaration. Candice encouraged them to keep very detailed records of their COVID-related expenses.

The larger and well-funded pantries like the Camden Area pantry and AIO pantry are pretty self-sufficient and need little help. They are buying enough food that meets minimum order amounts so it is not an issue for them. These pantries also have more than enough volunteers. The AIO is actually having to turn some volunteers away because they actually have too many. It's the smaller food pantries that need our help. It has been a little bit difficult to convince some of them that we are here to help. Some may not completely understand what County Government has to do with what they do or they just don't like government involvement. Even if some of them never respond to emails or participate in the Zoom calls, the information is still being sent to them, and Candice is working with some of the "more active" pantries to involve the "less active".

Currently, the biggest issue relates to Good Shepherd. They had been shipping food to LL Bean, who was then boxing it up and sending it back to Good Shepherd to distribute to the pantries. Good Shepherd, unfortunately keeps running out of food. Some of what they've been sending, like a 10 lb. bag of split dried peas, some people have no idea how to use it. For any pantry not receiving the boxes because of a lack of food to send, they've been sending gift cards to Hannaford or something else, but the pantry folks don't want to go clean out what's left on the grocery store shelves. To deal with this, Candice has been working with the smaller pantries to arrange a USDA additional drop off of food since most of them don't have enough volunteers, or vehicles to go drive up to Augusta to pick it up themselves.

As the COVID situation progresses, we are expecting a greater need for food. Already the pantries are seeing an increased number of folks needing help, as well as current clients needing for help. The numbers went down a little directly following the release of the stimulus checks, but it's starting to go back up. The tourism industry, service industry and fishing industry, among others, are taking a hit this year, and as the summer progresses with more and more people either making less money or none at all. Unfortunately, this situation is going to get worse. Some of the school systems have chosen to NOT continue feeding students after the June 30 cut-off of the reduced and free lunch program through the Department of Education, so those families are likely going to need additional help during July and August before kids start up school again.

A weekly Zoom meeting was held this afternoon and they were really pleased to hear that the County Commission has them in mind. They are aware Candice is setting up accounts with food purchasing vendors in order to help quickly if need be, but having the formal stamp of approval means a lot to them. Candice will develop a process for them to request food when they want to purchase from a vendor with a minimum order too high for them to do it on their own.

If you have any questions about any of this, please contact Candice. She will be working from home Wednesday and Thursday. Her cell phone number is 542-8420. Candice will be back in the office on Friday.

Knox County Regional Airport – Jeremy Shaw:

Things are going well here at the Airport. Jim and Paul have returned to work full time. Now the weather is better they can work outside and keep their distance. Vicki is working from home for the most part. She is coming in now on Tuesday & Friday mornings for a few hours. Mike Dean just purchased her a lap top due to she needs to have that to work efficiently from home. This was also due to the fact that the Airport did not have any laptops for personal use. The one laptop the Airport owns is hooked to the heating system.

Cape Air is still flying 3 flights a day. We are still receiving all the landing fees so that's a plus. EMA brought the Airport down some masks so that is a huge deal!

We did receive confirmation that we will be receiving the \$17.9 million dollar grant which will need to be spent over the next four (4) years. We have been working with Stantec on different

projects to help best utilize this money; not only for the Airport but for the Community. We want to run some ideas by the APAC and Commissioners on best ways to use this grant. We do not have a lot of debt; we have cash reserves and payments that are comparable to Airports that are larger than us with a low budget. Those are reasons why we were given the \$17.9 million dollar grant. Time is ticking.....funds have to be used by 2024. There are other Communities that are really struggling and we just happened to be one of the 27 Airports that may not ever need Federal funding again. We are in a good position.

Sheriff's Department/Patrol – Sheriff Carroll:

The guys are out there working and being careful, same game plan as we have had before. At this point there are no known exposures. Most calls are being answered by phone, not in person. I like the face-to-face interaction because I think it's also what Citizens like, but at this time things are going a little different. Our numbers are "down" which typically is a good thing. Domestic violence is down by 40% and Sex Offenses are down by 30%. I'm a little concerned because where everyone has to be home there is no real "outlet", and I'm afraid people are dealing with these things in their own way. It would be nice to know if some of these numbers are down due to our enforcement efforts and actions.

Jail – Sheriff Carroll:

The Jail is very busy even though our numbers are down. There is a total of 41 inmates and they are in different sectors, some in the Jail, some at the Re-Entry Center, some are doing "home confinement". Our Jail is a seventy (70) bed facility and as of today there are 27 inmates in the Jail, seven (7) went to "home confinement", six (6) are at the Re-Entry Center in Belfast and one (1) at a Healthcare facility due to substance abuse. There have been a couple inmates we have had to bring back from "home confinement" due to not being able to "abide" by the rules. I want to thank Ray for his efforts in supplying enough PPE for us. We are still allowing visits at the Jail. There are non-contact rooms so people can still see their family members. Phone Vendors for the Jail has waived fees for the next 30 days so the inmates have access to use the phone when they need it.

Currently we need to fill one Corrections Officer position. There is a "Maintenance" position available that we need to fill as soon as possible. The Jail (Public side) is constantly being cleaned by the Civil Department.

HR – Laurie Bouchard:

Most of you know about the "Families First" Corona Virus Response Act that came out back in the beginning of April. There are two parts to the law, one is a Paid Sick Leave Act and the other is the Emergency FMLA Expansion Act. We're complying with the new Acts. Knox County has decided to provide the benefits on the Paid Sick Leave Act portion of that response act, so this way Employees are eligible. There is up to two weeks of pay at their regular hours, and regular pay if they have a positive test for COVID-19. This applies if they have to stay home on a doctor's order because they have symptoms that are similar and they've been told to self quarantine, or they have the family member in that same situation. There's also provisions for childcare under the Paid Sick Leave Act for up to two weeks; that is 2/3 pay where the other is at full pay. So that portion of the Paid Sick Leave Act is being provided to all employees of the County. While the County could have exempted essential workers it doesn't really make any sense to do that. So those benefits are being provided and there are some Employees who have benefited from the Paid Sick Leave benefits already. The emergency FMLA Expansion Act is for childcare and it goes beyond. So the first two weeks are covered under the Paid Sick Leave Act, and then there are an additional ten (10) weeks available under the Emergency FMLA. We've had just one or two Employees so far who has benefited from that. So the Non-Essential Employees of the County have access to the benefits under the Emergency FMLA. These benefits are available even if somebody has a fever for example and is told to stay home, so they can use this benefit for that purpose. Please contact Laurie Bouchard if you have any questions. hr@knoxcountymaine.gov.

III. Action Item**1. Act to Authorize the EMA Director to Expend Funds from the EMA Disaster Reserve and/or Matching Grant Reserve Account Relating to the COVID-19 Pandemic.**

- *A motion was made by Commissioner Meriwether to Act to Authorize the EMA Director to Expend Funds from the EMA Disaster Reserve and/or Matching Grant Reserve Account Relating to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Parent. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

IV. Other

- Sheriff Carroll stated that Knox County hasn't really put anything out to the County to inform them of what the County is doing regarding the COVID-19 situation, and what the County is providing for services to the people. He suggested having some sort of press release to let people know.
- Commissioner Meriwether stated that the County is actually doing a lot of steps to help out during the pandemic. We do have a terrific writer in EMA who could put something together and submit it to the press. It is the responsibility of Knox County to promote ourselves.

V. Adjourn

- *A motion was made by Commissioner Parent to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Meriwether. A vote was taken with all in favor.*

The meeting adjourned at 12:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Galvin
Administrative Assistant

The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their regular meeting held on June 9, 2020.